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DISHES ACCOMPANYING BREADFRUIT

252 With the gradual souring of the *ma* through long keeping, the native palate feels the need of accompanying dishes to take the edge off the vinegary preparation. Coconut milk counteracts the acid and is often mixed with the *popoi ma*, sometimes without water, sometimes with. On Hiva Oa, this is called *popoi kae'e* or *ko'ehua* or *nahau;* in Nuku Hiva, *popoi hakauo.*

251 252 The ideal accompaniment of *popoi hakavo* is skate (*fafaua, Raia cephaloptera*) or shark, of which two species are used as food by the natives, *peata* (*Squalus carcharias*) and *mano* (*Squalus maou*). Both of these great fish are treated in the same fashion except that, as the wings of the skate do not spoil, they are hung up to dry without being treated, and are left conveniently hanging for anyone to cut off a piece to chew whenever he wishes. The bodies of the fish, however, are cut into small cubes, salted and wrapped in fau leaves, preferably those in which *ma* has been cooked, as the fish seems to keep better in these cooked leaves though on Hiva Oa it is often wrapped in the clothlike sheath at the base of the coconut leaf stem. These packages of fish—often as many as sixty are made at a time—will keep for months without decomposing, though they emit an odor like ammonia. When a package is opened, the fish is rinsed in sea water and eaten with *popoi hakauo*, its strongly acid, peppery taste harmonizing with the deacidized *popoi*. Skate is sometimes eaten raw with sea [263] water the first day after it is caught, but not later. It should be remarked that in the old days salt for salting the few fish that were so preserved was obtained from sea pools left by the tides and evaporated by the sun. On Nuku Hiva, the natives tell of an old salt mine.

252 According to Jardin, certain lichens and sea weeds are eaten with [222] *popoi: imu nanie, imu veve, imu kanayoi, imu topua* (15, pp. 55-7). *Popoi ma* is also eaten with raw fish, never at present by tearing the fish with the teeth as I have seen it done in the Tuamotu Islands, but by cutting it into cubes and soaking it in sea water. Nowadays, following the Tahitian custom, the natives add the juice of the lime which partly cooks it. According to Melville (23, p. 236), however, the cruder method of eating fish was once in vogue, for he says:

> I grieve to state so distressing a fact, but the inhabitants of Typee were in the habit of devouring fish much in the same way that a civilized being would eat a radish, and without any more previous preparation. They eat it raw; scales, bones, gills, and all the inside. The fish is held by the tail, and the head being introduced into the mouth, the animal disappears with rapidity that would at first nearly lead one to imagine it had been launched bodily down the throat.

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sea to fish, and were consequently driven to eating rats. Some say they braised the rats, others say they mashed them in the small round holes to be seen today in the stones of house platforms, and ate them raw with *popoi*. Today meat of various kinds is cut in strips, salted, washed, and dried in the sun; but it is doubtful if it was so conserved in former days.

If there is no *inai* to go with the *popoi*, a ripe banana or a piece of coconut will suffice. Formerly the eggs of the *tara* (small birds which live on the rocks by the sea) were broken into a length of large bamboo, which was sealed with a leaf tied over the open end. When baked, this dish also served as a substitute for meat and fish.

VEGETABLE, FRUIT, AND NUT DISHES

When breadfruit is gone and the sour *ma* is growing scarce, the natives begin to utilize other native products. A variety of dishes are made. Among these are *feikai puauhi* made of raw wild yams peeled and cut up into the coconut-leaf baskets and baked in the oven with coconut milk in the fashion of the *mei feikai; feikai huetu* (a kind of wild banana called *fei* in Tahiti) made of raw, very ripe *huetu* and coconut milk, cooked in the same way; *feikai ta'o* made sometimes with the large *kape ta'o* (*Colocasia esculenta*); *feikai kuma'a* (sweet potato); *feikai hue arahi* (pumpkin); and *feikai meika* (banana). All the fruits must be half-cooked before the *feikai* is made.

Taro forms the basis for a native dish called *poke*. The taro is first peeled and grated (formerly on coral). This is a difficult task, since contact with the raw taro makes the hands itch, so that they must be held now and then over the fire to relieve them, and never, during the process, be put into water. The gratings are wrapped in fau leaves, and baked in the oven. Meanwhile, coconut flesh has been grated, mixed with pounded *ti* leaves to aid in extracting the oil and the whole squeezed from a strainer into a bowl. Hot stones are dropped into the bowl of liquid, which is stirred constantly for about half an hour, until the oil forms and the sauce, which is called *koneko* (8), thickens. When the taro is taken out of the oven, it is pounded with a stone, mixed with the sauce, and eaten hot. *Poke ta'o* can also be made with ripe breadfruit, when such is to be had. The grated taro is kneaded with the flesh of ripened breadfruit on the food board, after which the dough is wrapped in taro leaves, with an outer covering of banana leaves, and left for two days in the ordinary oven. It is eaten with oil of coconut as is the pure *ta'o poke*. Today taro is also baked in its skin in an oven in the same way that sweet potatoes are cooked.